and, occasionally, of human life. In its earlier stages, religion may have had much of dread and of grim shedding of man's blood. Under the Chou, the more repulsive features appear gradually to have disappeared. Earlier, too, some phallicism probably existed. Possibly, indeed, it was quite prominent. However, it, also, apparently slipped into desuetude and its conventionalized symbols lost their original significance. Ceremonies to the ancestors were in temples constructed for them, or in special rooms or alcoves reserved for them in the dwellings of their descendants, for the dead were treated as having the needs of the living. Ancestors were represented by tablets. The others of the spirits and gods were worshipped in the open air, and near the capital particularly were altars to the most important of them. Some ceremonies appear to have been held in sacred groves. Much of the communal life of the peasants centered round the sacred place, and this, as we have seen, seems later largely to have coalesced with the power and rites of the feudal lord.

Since the proper maintenance of religious ceremonies was essential to the cooperation of spiritual beings with men and so the welfare of society, it was a matter of public concern and one of the chief functions of the state. Each of the feudal lords had ceremonies at which he must officiate, and some of the most important could be performed only by the *Wang.* No class which could strictly be called priestly existed, for the conduct of religious rites was one of the responsibilities of officials charged with administration. However, experts in ritual, who directed the officials in this phase of their duties, formed a recognized profession and were recruited from the upper classes.

Diviners, as we have seen, were also a separate

profession.

Moreover, a special class existed, held in much less respect than were these others, whose members claimed to act as spokesmen—or spokeswomen, for they were from both sexes—of the unseen, and who, to this end, on occasion could become possessed by the spirit with which they claimed communication.

The schools of philosophy which arose during the later centuries of the Chou were all more or less strongly tinged with these religious beliefs, some partly endorsing and partly modifying them, and some rationalizing or repudiating them in whole or in part.

The common interest which ran through most of the schools